



Caregiver Fact Sheet

Avoiding Falls

Dementia, age, and medicines can affect vision, walking, and judgment and make falls more likely to occur. You can help your family member avoid falls by:

- Asking your family member's doctor or pharmacist to check medicines for potential side effects (like confusion, dizziness, and problems with balance).
- Making sure medicines are taken at the right dose and time, as prescribed by the doctor. If your family member has problems remembering to take medicines, consider leasing an electronic medication dispenser.
- Having eyes checked at least once a year.
- Checking blood pressure frequently, to make sure it's not too high or low. Both low and high blood pressure can cause dizziness.
- Having hearing checked. If your family member has a hearing aid, make sure batteries are working. It's also a good idea to have a hearing specialist check that your family member is inserting and using the hearing aid properly.
- Reducing background noise, which can cause confusion or agitation.
- Encouraging your family member to wear shoes that fit right and have slip-resistant soles.
- Ensuring that clothing, especially long pants or nightgowns, do not drag, bunch or tangle around the ankles or feet.
- Keeping rooms, stairways, and hallways well-lit and glare-free. As we age, our eyes need more light to see and are more sensitive to glare.
- Installing motion sensitive lighting in hallways, stairways, and frequently used rooms, and using night lights.
- Using bright colors (i.e., not soft or pastel colors), contrasting colors, or patterns on the surfaces of furniture and around doorways to make it easier for someone who has vision difficulty to see them.
- Using brightly colored paint on non-carpeted steps to highlight the edges. You can also use colored tape to make the edges easier to see but replace the tape if it becomes worn or tattered.
- Checking carpet to make sure edges are not frayed or worn.
- If carpet is loose, use double-sided sticky tape to secure it.
- Installing grab bars or handrails in bathrooms (near toilet and in tub/shower) and along stairways.
- Using shower mats, non-slip appliques, strips, or stickers to prevent slipping.
- Keeping pathways clear by moving clutter (like books, magazines, clothing, and shoes) and extension cords.
- Removing area rugs.
- Removing furniture that's not needed to create clearer pathways.
- Using chairs that are the right height, sturdy, and have solid armrests.





Caregiver Fact Sheet

- Buying a lift chair if it's too hard for your family member to get out of a regular chair.
- Keeping frequently used items (like phones and remote controls) nearby.
- Putting photos on cabinets or drawers to show what's inside. For example, tape a photo of socks on the outside of the sock drawer.
- Making sure the bed is the right height for your family member to safely come to a standing position.
- If pets are in the home, making sure they have collars that are bright, in easy to see colors (especially ones that contrast with the color of their fur), reflective, or glow-in-the-dark.
- Keeping outdoor pathways clear.
- Checking porches, sidewalks, and steps to see if any repairs are needed.
- Using motion-sensitive lighting for walkways or stairways.
- Encouraging your family member to get regular activity and exercise. Not moving enough leads to problems with fitness, strength, balance, and walking.
- Allowing your family member extra time in order to move slowly.
- Using simple sentences (e.g., "Come with me to the bathroom") when there's something you need your family member to do.
- Having a medical professional, like a physical therapist or occupational therapist, conduct a home safety assessment to see if there are things your family member can do to reduce fall risk. These services may be covered by Medicare home health if your family member is homebound and requires skilled care.
- Seeing if an occupational therapist or other professional can recommend safety equipment such as a walker, tub bench, handrails, grab bars, or reaching aids.

If your family member falls, stay calm and check for injuries before trying to move him or her. If your family member is hurt or can't get up, call 9-1-1. Have your family member stay where he or she is until help arrives. Pay attention to what caused the fall so that you can make changes in the future.

Content of this fact sheet was prepared by Lauren Drake-Thomas, MPA, OTR as a community service.

